

**FINDINGS:** Since Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, fundamental human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, have been under assault. The Uzbek government harshly penalizes individuals for independent religious activity, regardless of their religious affiliation. A restrictive religion law severely limits the rights of all religious communities and facilitates the Uzbek government's control over them, particularly the majority Muslim community. The Uzbek government continues to arrest Muslims and repress individuals, groups, and mosques that do not conform to government-prescribed practices or that the government claims are associated with extremist political programs. This policy has resulted in the imprisonment of thousands of persons; many reportedly are denied due process and are subjected to torture. Though security threats do exist in Uzbekistan, including from members of groups that claim a religious linkage, these threats do not excuse or justify the scope and severity of the Uzbek government's maltreatment of religious believers.

Based on these severe violations, USCIRF continues to recommend in 2010 that Uzbekistan be designated as a "country of particular concern," or CPC. The State Department has so designated Uzbekistan since 2006.

Uzbek police and security forces raid and repress members of registered and unregistered religious groups for peaceful religious activity. Members of non-violent unregistered Muslim groups have been convicted and sentenced to lengthy prison terms in trials that fall far short of international standards. Since 2008, the Uzbek government has initiated a campaign against the *Nur* group, charging them with alleged extremism, although they are not known to use or advocate violence. Uzbek courts in 2009 sentenced 47 individuals to prison terms totaling 380 years. Religious minority groups, especially those viewed as engaging in proselytism, also are targeted. A Pentecostal pastor and three Jehovah's Witnesses recently have been imprisoned.

**PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:** The State Department should again designate Uzbekistan as a CPC. Upon re-designation, no waiver should be given and sanctions should be imposed, including a ban on visits to the United States by high-level Uzbek officials. U.S. policy on Uzbekistan should be coordinated across agencies to ensure that human rights concerns are reflected in all dealings with the Uzbek government and that U.S. security and other assistance does not go to agencies responsible for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. U.S. assistance, except humanitarian assistance and human rights programs, should be contingent on the Uzbek government's actions to improve religious freedom conditions and comply with international human rights standards. These actions should include ending reliance on convictions based solely on confessions; establishing a review mechanism for those detained or charged with religious, political, or security offenses; making public a detailed list of individuals currently detained or imprisoned for such offenses; and releasing those imprisoned solely due to their religious beliefs or practices. The United States also should press the Uzbek government to revise its 1998 religion law to bring it into accord with international standards and to permit an independent international investigation into the May 2005 Andijon events. Additional recommendations for U.S. policy towards Uzbekistan can be found in the 2010 Annual Report chapter on Uzbekistan and by following this link: <http://www.uscirf.gov/images/ar2010/uzbekistan2010.pdf>